

## **Abhidhamma with Ven. Dhammadipa from Czechoslovakia**

### **{ The mind and its mental factors }**

Nammo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma sambuddhasa

Nammo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma sambuddhasa

Nammo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma sambuddhasa

I will tackle the mind and its mental factors not exactly according to the order of the book. I will start with the living tradition, and then come back to the book. We have said that the book starts with the analysis of the *akusala cittas*. We have pointed out the reasons for that is connected with the superior intelligence of the author of this treatise. Now, in the living tradition, of course, one does not start in this order. In order to understand these *cittas* and *cetasikas*, seeing *cittas* and *cetasikas* is not enough. We have to understand how they appear and disappear in the mind processes.

They appear and disappear, especially in the *Atakas* the Abhidhamma literature. The Abhidhamma commentaries stress that the way they appear and disappear is according to the *citta niyama*. The interdependence, which is the essence of this order, is the condition for real understanding of these *cittas* and *cetasikas*. Otherwise, we just miss the point, because these *cittas* and *cetasikas* are not static entities, but are very dynamic entities always in the process of changing. Because we do not see this process of change, we are bound in ignorance, which gives us

the idea of one mind, one thinker, one who feels, and one who cognizes as being a permanent entity.

The key of seeing these *cittas* and *cetasikas*, the most important aspect of mind, the *citta*, is just *cetana*, just cognition. The *lakkhana*, characteristic, of *citta* is only *vijnana*, just differentiation. There is no one who differentiates no one who thinks. This we can understand by understanding the different functions of the different minds and different mental factors, how they appear and disappear like an endless stream of water. Even so, the contents of the water, basically appears according to the same laws. Nevertheless, we never enter the same river. When one has seen how these different minds and mental factors appear and disappear in each and every moment of perception, how they all have different functions, how they are just a collection each with a different characteristic, then our clinging to mind will be radically weakened. Because the mind is the most impermanent thing in this world, the fastest changing thing in this world. Of all the *dhammas*, the mind changes the fastest. Nevertheless, of all the things that we experience in this world, it is the mind with its *cetasikas* that we tend to most obstinately identify with ourselves. Buddha said in the *Agamas*, it is almost impossible for the unenlightened man to get disenchanted with the mind.

Normally, meditation starts with the contemplation of that phenomena whose change is easily perceptible. That is *rupa*. It is very easy, and even the ordinary man can easily see that this body of ours and the objects in the world are in the process of change. The change of the body, corporeality, is very easily perceptible. It is, so to say, the outer layer of our existence, and

the outer layer of our existence is that phenomena that changes the slowest. However, if the mind is strong, if it has developed the higher levels of concentration, if it has developed the *mahaggata citta*, sublime states of mind, the rupa and arupa absorptions, they can start to understand the selfless nature of all phenomena in the world. Meditators who have reached higher absorptions can start right away with the analysis of the mind, because of the strength of the mind they are using.

It is an advantage, as well as the traditional way of learning meditation, to first learn the sublime states of mind, *mahaggata citta*, before coming to *vipassana*. This standard is described in innumerable suttas innumerable *Agamas* of the Pali Canon. It was the standard that before teaching *vipassana*, Buddha taught the sublime states of mind. Why? Because it is his own experience. It is recognized in all the Buddhist traditions that Buddha himself, after renouncing his ascetic practices, returned to the practice of the sublime states of mind, *mahaggata citta*, which he has previously mastered.

There is a story that he determined never to break his *paryamka*, posture, under the Bodhi tree unless he experienced the supreme enlightenment. After taking such a determination and trying to find the way towards supreme enlightenment, the first thing that came to his mind was the memory of the first *jhana* he experienced as a child under a *Jambu* tree. While attending a festival and waiting for his father under a tree, he reached *jhana*. This is a very famous story that students of Buddhism all know.

Then, according to *Upakkilesa Sutta* in the Majjhima Nikaya, the very content of Buddhas' enlightenment is sharpening and bringing to perfection the *mahaggata cittas*, the worldly

absorptions. Buddha explained to Aniruddha that this was exactly what he did under the Bodhi tree. He mastered the worldly *jhanas* – the *jhana* with applied and sustained thought, the *jhana* with sustained but not applied thought, *jhana* without applied and sustained thought, *jhana* with exhaltation, and *jhana* without exhaltation. Thus, he completed his preparatory training for the *abhinna*.

Then, as we know, he used his *abhinnas*, namely the *pubbenivasa abhinna*, the recollection of the past lives, and the *dibbacakkhu*, celestial eye. One of the functions of the celestial eye is seeing how human beings die and are reborn due to our kamma. That he saw. And having seen these things, he then experienced immediately after *sotapanna*, he became an Arahant and entered *nirodha sammapatti*. Then, throughout his whole life, the Buddha praised these *mahaggata cittas*, the sublime states of mind, and the 8 *sammapattis* as the *anatta dvara*, the gate to deathlessness. In one sutta, Ananda explains that the Buddha taught 11 gates to deathlessness – 7 *samapattis* and the 4 *brahmayaras* (?).

So, the absorptions of mind are the traditional way to deathlessness. In the Chinese traditions, they are called *rulai chan*. This means “The Chan of the Tathagata” or “The Jhana of Tathagata,” because the Tathagata himself always praised them as the best practice leading to deathlessness. In the living tradition of Abhidhamma, and in the commentaries, these *mahaggata cittas*, the 8 kinds of absorption in worldly objects, are the necessary preliminary training for a detailed understanding of mind processes and their contents or their mental factors. How are the mental factors and minds analyzed

in the *jhanas*, you can consult *Anupada Sutta* or *Magandhiya Sutta* in Majjhima Nikaya, which explain the practice of *vipassana* in *jhana*.

So, in the living tradition, we do not start with the analysis of the *akusala cittas*. We come to them after having trained in the *mahaggata cittas*, in the sublime states of mind. In our book, they come after the *akusala cittas*, *ahetuka citta*, and *kamavacara sobhana citta*. Only then come these *mahaggata cittas*, and only before the *lokuttara cittas*. This is not accidental that they come before the *lokuttara cittas*, because they are traditionally used as the training for *vipassana*, which leads to the experience of *lokuttara cittas*, supramundane minds.

– If I am using any term you are not familiar with you should tell me. (laughter) I am sorry because some times I am not always familiar with the English term. If I am using any word you are not familiar with you should let me know. I am here not to teach myself, but to teach you. Even so I am myself benefiting from teaching you. I enjoy it. But I can only enjoy it when you understand. –

So we come to the Mahaggata citta, the sublime mind. Why it is the sublime mind?

So, what is the nature of normal *kamavacara citta*? It is always changing the object. Why? Because of the monkey nature of our mind. *Capalamucittam* is the restless mind. The *kamavacara* mind is restless mind. No matter what we do with the mind, good or bad, it does not stay. Why? What means the *capalacittam* It is the nature of the *kamavacara citta*, of the perception dominated by the 5 sensual objects, and most of the

perception in the *kamavacara citta* – just listen to what ordinary people talk about and you will be clear what they are thinking about: the things they have enjoyed, beautiful things they have seen, beautiful things they have touched, good food they have eaten, good smells they have smelled, and so on. You hardly hear anything else in ordinary conversation.

Why is that so? Because, this perception, *kamavacara citta*, is dominated by sensual objects, so even the wholesome minds in this sphere of perception are very weak minds. Why? Because *capala citta* runs to the object that appears distinctly in the door of perception. If a color is distinct in the door of perception, then it runs to the color. If a sound becomes distinct, then it runs to the sound. When a smell becomes distinct, and it runs to the smell. And while running to the smell, it remembers the color, and it runs to the color.

This is the nature of the monkey mind. Even the good things we do with this mind have no power to bring us real wisdom. That is why those who accumulate wisdom with these weak minds are like those trying to walk around the Earth with only one foot. A very difficult way.

In order to stand firmly, to establish mind in a firm perception, the traditional training is the training in the *dhyanas*. Not only in Buddhism, but also in other Indian philosophies they all were trained in *dhyanas (jhanas)*. And not only Indians, but Jews, Muslims and early Christians, all learned in the power of concentration. The power of prayer is nothing else but the power of concentration. That is why religious people were able to remember whole books without spending a long time memorizing. This was traditional training in concentration, and

without this training, the mind will always keep on running, running, running to that object that appears dominant at the moment to whatever door of perception.

It is an absolute necessity if one wants to have a deeper religious experience, no matter what one believes, to stabilize one's mind in non-distracted perception. Non-distracted perception is nothing else but the state of *dhyana*, which is *upanijjhana*, the contemplation of the object from near. This, according to the Visuddhi Magga, burns the obstacles to stable perception. That mind is also the base for deeper understanding of the Abhidhamma. And, the more systematic training one gets in *mahaggata cittas*, these sublime states of mind, the easier it will be to understand this sublime and special teaching of the Abhidhamma, they are based on stable perception.

So, the mind in these *mahaggata cittas*, sublime states of cognition, differs from normal mind that we are using now. While we find ourselves in these sublime states of mind, our mind is stabilized on one single object. While it is in the state of absorption in the sublime cognition, it simply does not run to any other object. The power of that cognition is so great that the mind just spits out the need to run to any other object, which is the characteristic of the normal mind that we are using. When one has perfected these sublime states of mind, then one can also study – this is part of Chapter 9 in your book – one trains such a mastery in the stability of perception that eventually, even though you change the object, the mind will have the power of the sublime states of mind. This is the highest perception. This is a condition of the *abhinna*, supernatural powers, due to which one can see in detail one's past life, one can see in detail how

beings die and are reborn according to *kamma*, one can see the thoughts of others, hear distant sounds, see through walls, and more.

It was quite a common thing in the time of Buddha that one could fly up like a bird, crossed leg, and go wandering around the Himalayas. The power of mind is just unthinkable, and we nowadays, our civilization has decayed, because we are not aware of these incredible powers of mind. Unfortunately, not only in Europe, but even in Asia, people are getting more and more obscured from the possibilities of the mind. But, for the ancient people, especially in Sri Lanka, India, these powers were common, like supermarkets are nowadays. Also, Arahants were very common.

This deviation was important, because we should understand how important the training in the supernatural mind. Let's come back to our subject matter. It is not by accident that two-thirds of the most important book on meditation, the Visuddhi Magga, is dedicated to *samadhi*. More is dedicated to *samadhi* than to *panna* and *sila* together. This shows how important this training in concentration was considered in the *Attagata* commentary tradition, which is connected to the Abhidhamma tradition. The *Visuddhi Magga* is based on the commentary tradition. The author of the Visuddhi Magga, Bhaddantacariya Buddhaghosa, also compiled the commentaries to the Suttas, Abhidhamma and even on the Vinaya. Although there were many different literary commentary traditions in old Sri Lanka, the only literary commentary tradition we have now is that compiled by Buddhaghosa. Of the other commentaries and interpretations, we have only in the *Attagatas* and *Tikas* themselves.



How, then, can we use for example the *Anupada Sutta* as the example of how to understand this living tradition? In *Anupada Sutta*, Buddha goes around at the Jetavana monastery and hears the sangha praising Moggallana for his supernatural feats, praising Revata for his deep absorption, praising Anaruddha for his divine vision, praising Ananda for his great erudition, but he is very surprised that nobody is praising Sariputta, the Dhamma-born son of Buddha. Wisdom and supernatural powers can be seen, divine visions can be recounted, and everyone will be impressed. Like Revata, one can go under a tree and disappear for 7 days in deep absorption, like a dead man. Everyone can see and be impressed. Ananda can explain everything, and everyone can be impressed. But there is also natural wisdom. Wisdom is connected with humility. Sariputta is the most humble among the disciples, even though he has the greatest wisdom among the disciples he is very humble. His power of *samadhi* is great – he is struck by a yakka on the head, but he feels just a slight headache, so powerful is his concentration. He is so familiar with the *nirodha samapatti* that when he goes begging, he will only accept food after entering *nirodha samapatti*, because he likes to give merit, so the giving is purified.

The commentaries to *Aranha Vibhanga* says, the giving is purified by wisdom, and the thing given is purified by love. Subhuti is supreme in purifying that which is given, and Sariputta is supreme in purifying the giving itself. Subhuti enters the *metta jhana* before accepting food, and Sariputta always enters *nirodha samapatti* before accepting food. So, Sariputta is supreme in purifying the giving, and Subhuti is supreme in purifying the gift itself.

In order to let everyone understand how great Sariputta is, the Buddha decides to praise Sariputta in front of all. So, he praises him many times for his great wisdom, and finally Buddha explains how Sariputta trained for his enlightenment, two weeks long after hearing the famous words of Assaji. When Assaji heard the words of the Buddha, he immediately became a *sotapanna*, a stream-enterer. Then, he recounted the same stanza to Moggallana, who also immediately became a *sotapanna*. Then, Moggallana trained for 1 week and became an Arahant. He then trained in the *abhinna*s, purified his *jhanas*, and then trained in *vipassana* in *jhana*.

Sariputta also trained in *vipassana* in *jhana*. How? The Buddha explained that Sariputta entered into the 1st *jhana*. Having entered the 1st *jhana*, he stayed in the 1st *jhana* as long as he wished. *Jhana* is so important because, if one does not have *jhana*, one will not be able to have a clear cognition of one's immediately preceding mind, it is not possible. The mind is not stable enough to stay on that object. But, if one trains in *jhana* and has a mastery of *jhana*, then what happens? Then having left the state of absorption, because the mind has stayed on the same object for 1, 2, 3 hours or even a whole day on the same object, the mind has terrible power. Then, when one arises from absorption, because of the stability of the mind, it can see the past mind, which is nothing else but the mind in absorption.

Suppose you train with the *anapanasati*, where you develop *nimitta*. Suppose you have developed *patibhaga nimitta*, the reflected image which is the object of the *upacara jhana* 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th *jhana*. In abhidhamma we speak of 5 *jhanas*. Then, having left the *jhana*, then you will be able to see the

*nimitta* under your nose or upper lip or in the *bhavanga*. The same sign you have been watching during *jhana*, you will be able to see in your heart, in the seed of your cognition, the base of your cognition, or the door of your cognition. *Bhavanga* is the door of your cognition.

Then, if the mind has been stabilized in perception, it can see this door of perception that is not difficult to see, and in that door of perception you can see also the flow of the *pavutti citta*, the active mind. When one arises from absorption, the mind that one sees is nothing else but the past mind, which is the mind that was in the absorption in the previous moment. Because of the stability of your mind, you are able to see it. There is no difficulty in that. Normally, you cannot see the flow of your mind, but due to this sublime state of cognition, you will be able to see it.

This is what Sariputta did. It is said, having risen from the 1st absorption, the *dhammas* that appear in the 1st absorption, knowingly arose and knowingly disappeared in each and every moment of perception. He saw the *dhammas* because he had stabilized his mind. His mind was not a monkey mind. His mind was a very firm mind, like a diamond. So, what did he see? He started with the most prominent *dhammas* and *cetasikas* of the 1st *jhana*, which are the *jhana angas*. *Anga* here means *hetu*, causes, of *jhana*. First, he sees the causes of *jhana*, because the causes of *jhana* are the causes of the 1st absorption, the *mahaggata citta*, which he has been cognizing. These are very prominent, so he sees them first. And, he determines in this flow of mind *vitakka*, applied thought.

What is applied thought? The characteristic of applied thought is the planting of the mind at the object. This is the characteristic of *vitakka*. It is the most important *dhamma* for learning *samatha* and *vipassana*. Without this *dhamma*, no *samatha* and no *vipassana*. Why? Because it brings the mind to the object. *Vitakka* is the power that brings mind to the object. According to the Northern abhidhamma, according to the Abhidhamma of Yogacara Bhumi, the Abhidhamma kosha commentary its essence is *pragya* and *cetana*, wisdom and will.

How does our mind go to the object? If you study Abhidhamma properly with absorption, you will see that the mind in the sensual sphere of perception cannot go to the object without the power of will and applied thought. The two are compared to two oars which move the boat of cognition towards the object. If there is no volition, there is no movement in the mind, and this volition will be stabilized only by this power of *vitakka*.

*Vitakka*, applied thought, is compared in the commentaries to an intimate friend of the king. Suppose Dhammadipa wants to see Frau Merkel, the German Chancellor. No way to see her, she is not interested in Dhammadipa. But suppose an intimate of Frau Merkel says, "You should receive Dhammadipa." Then, Frau Merkley sends an invitation "Dhammadipa come, come. Same is said with the *vitakka*, it introduces. A normal person has no way of entering the object. There has to be *vitakka*, and then one can enter the object. And the object here is the wanted object of *samatha* and *vipassana*. Due to that power, the mind has been stabilized on the object of absorption.

That power also comes as the most prominent one in the 1st jhana, because due to it one is able to leave the sense-dominated

perception and is able to enter the sphere of higher perception. But for those who have already practiced vipassana and have developed mind, this power of mind to go to the object becomes a nuisance. It is a very troublesome power. Why? Because its *rasa*, its taste or function, is repeated striking of the object. It takes the mind and strikes it at the object (*striking the table*). For those who have a developed mind, it is very troublesome to be lead to the object and strike it. It literally strikes the mind at the object. And how is it manifested? *nayana cittasam*, bringing the mind to the object. And what is the primary cause of this mind? All the other *cetasikas* that are brought to the object. Without them, that mental factor has no function. So, this is the first *dhamma* that Sariputta and anyone who learns according to the Abhidhamma system sees very clearly when he has arisen from his 1st jhana and investigated his 1st jhana mind.

The second factor that Sariputta sees, and each one of us can see, provided we have stabilized our minds in absorption, is *vicara*, sustained thought. The characteristic of sustained thought is, literally, it massages the mind at the object. It lets the mind sustain its place in the vicinity of the object. *Aramana ayuvajanna* is the *lakkhana* of this power of mind, which allows the meditator to remain in the vicinity of the desired object. Here we speak of the desired object because we speak of the *samatha* and *vipassana* practice. Then, the *rasa*, taste, of this *cetasika* is the continued application of associated states to the object. The associated states are all the other mental factors, of course. Now, the manifestation of this sustained thought is *cittassa anupapandinna* it anchors the other mental states to the object.

Because these two *dhammas* are very important in the process of learning *samatha* and *vipassana*, we find 4 or 5 illustrations in the *Visuddhi Magga*. Perhaps the most impressive illustration is: suppose you have a bee that flies to a beautiful flower, flying from afar to a beautiful flower is like applied thought. Now, the bee will not immediately land on the beautiful flower. It will first hover around before it lands. This hovering around is this sustained thought. The *Visuddhi Magga* and the Northern tradition both emphasize that we have to understand both of these two forces. The *vitakka*, applied thought, is the grossness of the mind and sustained thought is the subtlety of the mind. If I remember well, in the Abhidhamma Kosha, *Mano jalpa* they are the *vaci sankhara*, it is said that they give rise to speech, therefore, because they bring the mind to the object, applied thought is manifested as a search for the object, and sustained thought is the detailed investigation of the object. This, then, gives rise to speech.

So, because these two *dhammas* are very indispensable for bringing mind to the object in the normal cognitions, not the sublime cognitions, therefore, the two exist in all moments of cognitions of mind in the *kamavacara* sphere, except *panca vinnana* (seeing, hearing, and so on). Just remember that in the *kamavacara* mind process, every moment of cognition, except the bare fact of seeing, hearing, and so on, is necessarily connected with these mental factors, because they are so indispensable for bringing mind to the object.

Now, what were the other *dhammas* that Sariputta saw, and that we can see? The next one is *piti*. *Piti* comes from *pineti*, fulfilling. *Piti* is that which fills us with exaltation, which fulfills

us. This *piti* becomes very, very prominent when mind is not disturbed, when mind is established in itself and not disturbed by different objects. The more one establishes oneself in one's own mind, the more one will be fulfilled. So, the characteristic of this mind, the *lakkhana*, is *sampiyayana*, endearing, fulfilling. Its taste is that it refreshes us, fulfills us completely. But, for one who has developed the concentrated mind, because this fulfilling or endearing is manifested as *odagya*, elation, it becomes a nuisance. As long as one is elated, one will not be able to maintain the perfect impartiality of mind, which is the necessary condition of ripening of wisdom. And, of course, it can only appear when there is *nama* and *rupa*. Without them, it will never function.

According to Visuddhi Magga, there are mentioned 5 different types of *piti*. One type is *ubbega* (?), rising up. *Ubbega* is also mentioned as one of the 11 *upaklesas* which the Buddha purified before experiencing enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. This rising up can be so powerful. It is mentioned in the Visuddhi Magga that one girl (during the Anuradhapura period) was so rejoicing at the merit of the parents who went to worship at the *stupa*, that she flew right to the *stupa* where her parents were worshiping. So great was her faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha that she flew. Then the parents were very surprised “where did you come from” “I don't know” (*Laughing*). I don't know I have not seen it, but anyway...

So, there are different kinds of *piti* according to intensity. Its perfect intensity, the 5<sup>th</sup> intensity, *pharana*, when it saturates the whole of body and mind. Now, the next *dhamma* that Sariputra was able to distinguish very clearly was *sukha*. *Sukha* here is of

course *somanassa*. Normally, when we say *sukha*, we mean is bodily pleasant feeling, but here the *sukha* means *somanassa*, the mental pleasant feeling. And this mental pleasant feeling is nothing else but the experience of receiving of the pleasant mental object. The feeling is nothing else but the reception of the mind. In Chinese, it is translated as reception of the mind, *li na*. So, while *piti* is rejoicing at the object and belongs to the *sankhara*, *sukha*, or *somanassa*, belongs to the *vedana*. It is a reception of the mind and a reception of the pleasant mental object. And due to the reception of the pleasant object, all our being flourishes. When we receive the unpleasant object, our being fades. So, the wise man accumulates the wholesome bodily, spoken and mental actions. That is why they experience pleasant sensations.

Then, if we come back to *somanassa*, its characteristic is *ita aramana anutavhana*, the experience or reception of the pleasant object. The *rasa* in the case of mental is *ita aramana sambhoga*, enjoyment of the pleasant object. In the Visuddhi Magga, there is a wonderful simile to help you understand the difference between *piti*, rejoicing, and *sukha*, happiness. The example is, suppose you are in the desert and you have not drank water for a long time. Then, in the distance, you see an oasis. What do you do? Seeing the oasis with a pool of cool water, you will be full of elation. Then, you run to the oasis and you plunge into the pond and drink and wash to your full pleasure. That is like receiving, *vedana*, the pleasant object and enjoying it, *sambhoga*. So, the manifestation is *cetasika asada*, the mental enjoyment. And the primary cause, because we are speaking of the absorptions, which are developed mind, is *passaddhi*, tranquility, relaxation and clarity. Clarity and



relaxation of mind and body – this is the condition of *samadhi*.  
Without *passaddhi*, no question of *samadhi*.

Here we only have 16 or 17 mentioned but in all there are 34 mental factors in the first jhana. We can investigate and see very clearly according to their characteristic and when we want to progress further we can see according to their *rasa*.